

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**The Marine Park School**

**Middle School 278**

**1925 Stuart Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11229**

**Principal: Debra Garofalo**

**Dates of review: October 7 - 8, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Chris Andrews**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Marine Park is a middle school with 1041 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 57% Black, 12% Hispanic, 25% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 16% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 - 2007 was 91.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 61% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

Marine Park School offers students a safe and stimulating environment in which to grow both academically and as young people. It rightly prides itself in providing opportunities for students to develop talents in drama, music and art, opportunities that have resulted in very prestigious public performances across the city. The quality of this provision reflects in a very practical sense the high expectations which the school has of, and for, its students. Parents and students regard the school and their teachers very highly, and see themselves as working in partnership to enable the students to progress to good high schools and thereafter to college. There is a very purposeful sense within the school, and students agree that they are often challenged in their classes "to do hard work". Support for students who find the work more challenging is good and ensures that interventions take place as soon as they are required. Classrooms are well resourced and the phased introduction of SMART boards is giving both teachers and students access to twenty-first century technology on an increasing basis. Teachers are not only highly regarded by the parents and students but also by the principal and her administration who support their professional development, although teachers do not have individualized development plans to structure their professional advancement.

There is much very good practice within the school, but this is not consistent in terms of its application. There is good evidence of goal setting and the provision of differentiated instruction in some subject areas but not in all, or for all students. The students can therefore only describe some of their goals, and these are sometimes in very general, aspirational, terms. Parents know how well their children are progressing but not necessarily what they need to do next to make further progress. Teachers and parents have some input into school improvement planning but this is very limited. However, all subscribe to the principal's vision for the school in both its aims and its possible future development as a high school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The identification of, and the support for, the different sub-groups is a strong feature of the school and allows these students to make progress.
- Communications between home and school are very effective, and allow parents and carers to be genuine partners in their children's learning.
- There is a strong culture of high expectations, which the school effectively communicates to parent and students, who are able to articulate what these are and how to achieve them.
- The culture within the school is one of mutual support and respect, so that students want to come to school because they feel safe and instruction engages them, particularly in respect of the strong arts curriculum.
- The support for teachers new to both the school and the profession is very good, and contributes very positively to the collaborative nature of the relationships between teachers and the administration.
- The school supports the personal growth of students very well, both through the guidance structure and the opportunities for them to discover and develop their wider talents.

### What the school needs to improve

- Continue to develop the goal setting procedures in the school so that all core subject areas have measurable goals for all students which can be shared with parents.
- Develop whole school improvement planning so as to include all stakeholders both in the planning and the evaluation cycle.
- Ensure the consistent use of all available data so that differentiated instruction in all classrooms matches that of the best practice.
- Create individual professional development plans for each teacher, incorporating more opportunities for them to undertake inter-visitations both within and across grades and content areas.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school gathers a wide range of data in order to plan strategically to meet the needs of its students. This data is generated both by the school itself in the form of formative assessments, observations and conferences and from State tests. This ensures that the administration and the teachers have a very clear picture of the performance of students, at all grade levels. The school analyzes math and English language arts data and shares it with all teachers. Social studies and science teachers use it to support their own formative assessment work. The data also enables administrators and faculty to identify quickly students who need support and to apply appropriate interventions. Data collection in other core areas is less consistently collected.

The identification of, and the support for, the different sub-groups is a strong feature of the school and allows these students to make progress, some achieving exemplary gains in math and English language arts. Communications between home and school are very effective, and allow parents and carers to be genuine partners in their children's learning. Letters home in mid-marking period support the progress reports to keep parents informed particularly if a student is giving some cause for concern by not making expected progress. Parents are therefore able to conference with the teachers during the marking period to help take appropriate remedial action.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has a wide range of data for planning for improvement and for setting goals. The use made of this data is especially strong in English language arts, in math and in social studies where there are very clear goals for students based on this data. Moreover, the school supports longer-term goals clearly with interim assessments so that it can identify smaller steps from skills analyses. As a result, students make progress and are aware of the steps they need to take to progress further. However, this process is not consistent across the school and in all core subjects. Some of the goals set are long term, such as to pass a Regents test, but lack specific measurable benchmarks or guides to structure the students' paths to their ultimate goal. In some subjects therefore students, and their parents, can clearly articulate their next learning steps but elsewhere this is not the case.

There are monthly meetings in grades and departments to ensure that teachers are adhering to the pacing calendars. Formative assessments, such as “do now” activities, help ensure that students are making the necessary progress. However, teachers indicate that, although some are members of the school leadership team, they have not been involved in whole-school improvement planning, such as the Comprehensive Educational Plan, and in general, parents are not involved in the planning, goal setting or evaluative processes either.

The inquiry team in its first year has focused on the performance of Black males and the progress report shows exemplary progress made by Black students in the school. There is also a more holistic approach to data collection and analysis in the school resulting from inquiry team’s leadership. However, the school has not yet embedded this consistently across all areas.

Teachers have high expectations that they communicate effectively to parents and students, who are able to articulate what these are and how to achieve them. Teachers model their expectations by their interactions with students and with each other, which contribute to the high levels of respect and courtesy in the school. Students know, from regular meetings and from conferencing with teachers, that they are expected to go to good high schools and then on to college, and they share this expectation. Teachers make good use of rubrics to identify high quality work and there are examples of student’s work to model good practice in some classrooms. The students are used to assessing their own work against the rubrics and undertake peer assessment to help embed their own learning.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed**

The curriculum in the school aligns to State standards, is clearly engaging for students and generally challenges them. As one student commented “they make you do hard work and you have to think”. This school rightly prides itself on the high quality and flexibility of its visual and performing arts curriculum. Students and parents alike greatly appreciate the opportunities for students to follow a variety of programs for one, two or three years selecting from music, drama, chorus, media or technology according to interest and aspirations. Observations by the administration suggest that this variety raises overall achievement in the subject areas and greatly enhances student self-confidence. The programs provide all students, whether higher or lower achievers, with equal opportunities to flourish in a variety of contexts. Many of these courses align with State standards and so underpin student learning within the core subjects. Within classrooms, teachers use a range of instructional strategies to engage students. The use of technology is growing, and teachers are becoming more adept at integrating the use of SMART boards into lessons to provide genuinely interactive activities for students. These both engage students and respond effectively to the needs of kinesthetic and visual learners.

Teachers in all core subjects have assessment systems in place to judge student progress but the use of the data produced is inconsistent, so that the quality of

differentiated instruction is variable. At its best, there are clear examples in math of students undertaking similar tasks but at significantly different levels of challenge based on their prior performance. In a social studies class, there are well-devised activities, based on an analysis of literacy skills and focused on specific student needs. Elsewhere, however, students undertook common tasks with a limited sense of work targeted towards need.

The principal and her cabinet effectively manage the resources, which align to the requirements of the students as indicated by data analysis. To meet the need to improve math scores, they have divided some grade 7 and 8 classes to produce small group instruction opportunities, with the result that the students' scores have improved. The hiring of a retired teacher to push into social studies has had a similar effect. The freeing up of a science teacher to provide focused professional development for colleagues in the use of equipment and tools has improved the quality of instruction in "hands on" activities and so increased student engagement. The provision of up to date technology, such as SMART boards has had a positive impact on learning while new programs, such as "readabout", have helped students progress in developing reading skills.

Students want to come to school because they feel safe and instruction engages them. The new grade 6 students, having felt some apprehension on starting a new school, explained that already they felt part of the school because 'people treat us well'. Parents, teachers and students of all ages speak of the supportive nature of the school and this reflects in the results of the learning environment survey.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal and administration strongly support the professional development of all members of faculty. There is a school schedule for professional development devised from a range of data, including classroom observations, a teacher questionnaire and school goals. While it reflects the needs of the school, there are no individual plans with specific goals for each teacher's development. The support for teachers new to both the school and the profession is very good. All such teachers have a mentor, a "buddy" teacher, with whom they meet and whom they can observe. They also receive good support from the coaches and are able to visit other classrooms. As a result, they settle quickly into the routines of the school and gain confidence in their new roles. This in turn allows them to contribute very positively to the collaborative nature of the relationships between teachers and the administration. This characterizes much of the school's work and creates a real sense of a learning community.

The regular faculty, grade and department meetings provide more than an administrative forum. They also act as a focus for professional dialogue and development, for example providing regular opportunities to discuss the skills analysis, which arise from assessments, and plan both full and mini-lessons to meet these needs. "Lunch and learns", although voluntary, are regularly attended by all staff and are sometimes led by individual teachers on topics they have identified from other discussions. Learning walks involve both the administration and members of faculty, are related to specific features of

lessons and also allow for further discussion of good practice in subsequent meetings. There are opportunities for teachers to undertake intervisitations, usually within the departments but sometimes to observe a different discipline. However, these appear limited and restricted by scheduling. Because of this, and partly because of the absence of teachers' individual plans, some opportunities are missed to share further best practice and enhance teachers' appreciation of the nature of high quality work.

The school supports the personal growth of students very well, both through the guidance structure and through the opportunities for them to discover and develop their wider talents. The grade leadership teams transition with the students, so enabling them to know the individual students very well. This has a particular benefit when planning transition to high school, but also enables close relationships to develop with both students and their families. All students therefore feel they have someone to turn to for help, both academically and personally, while the consistency of leadership ensures that students have no doubts as to what the school expects of them. The opportunities for students to play music, act, or follow a particular interest in technology or media also contribute significantly to their growth and to the development of their self-esteem.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

There is a clear cycle for monitoring and reviewing plans, which has contributed significantly to the progress made by the school. School leaders regularly examine core data and teachers are able to show clearly in English language arts and math how they assess students both formatively and summatively. From this data, they set the next learning goals but this practice is not consistent across all core subjects. As a result, students are not able to articulate their short-term learning steps for all subjects with equal facility.

The school leaders make good use of the data to adjust the organizational structure and to monitor teachers' instruction. These adjustments have resulted in different groupings, teachers moving to different grades and new pairings created, for example, for collaborative team teaching classes. The administration is therefore very responsive to school and student needs and flexible in that response.

The principal has a clear vision for the school that the rest of the community shares fully. This is to provide individualized instruction to create lifelong learners who see themselves as "college bound" from as soon as they enter the school in grade 6. One of the engines for driving this is an increased use of technology to inspire students and to use the arts, as "kids are more than just readers or a math score". Her long-term planning shows that she has the strategies to move towards this, and the support in the wider school community for her work is undoubted.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: The Marine Park School</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?				<b>X</b>
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DY0, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?				X
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.**

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?				X
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?				X
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>